

James Ujaama speaks out against scrutiny

By CANDACE HECKMAN, SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

10:00 pm PDT, Friday, July 19, 2002

[James Ujaama](#) said in a statement yesterday that he and his brother, [Mustafa Ujaama](#), are prepared to challenge criminal charges -- if any are ever brought against them -- that suggest they associated with terrorists.

In addition, James Ujaama said that an FBI inquiry into the brothers' activities and subsequent media reports have damaged his business and shattered their family.

"My brother and I are not terrorists, and we should not have been charged in the media and harassed," James Ujaama said in a statement e-mailed to Seattle Post-Intelligencer columnist [Robert L. Jamieson](#) Jr. last night.

News reports in the past few days have said the brothers are being investigated for their ties to the defunct Central District mosque Dar-us-Salaam, which is said to be under scrutiny for possible links to [Osama bin Laden](#)'s [al-Qaida](#) terrorist network.

The FBI and prosecutors have refused to confirm those reports, and no charges have been brought against the brothers.

But Ujaama's statement yesterday -- his first lengthy and direct comments about the matter -- indicated the brothers are under such an investigation.

"Friends who were contacted by the FBI were told that we were terrorists," Ujaama wrote. "Shortly before the newspaper article (July 12), I received a

phone call from my panicked friend. He said, 'The FBI came to my office and you should leave. They asked me questions about you and wanted to know about your travels. They told me not to have any contact with you.'"

People in Seattle's Central District neighborhood, where the brothers grew up, said they could hardly believe the allegations.

The brothers were born [James Ernest](#) and [Jon Thompson](#). Their mother, [Peggy Thompson](#), worked at a social services agency and got them involved in the community, King County Councilman [Larry Gossett](#) said.

The Rev. [Robert Jeffrey](#) of [New Hope Baptist Church](#) said Mustafa Ujaama, a mechanic and car salesman, attended his church before converting to Islam and has long worked to eradicate drugs and street violence.

Jeffrey said he could not vouch as easily for James Ujaama, who has traveled often. Still, he called him "a very principled person."

"They've been busy for a long time -- visiting elected officials, trying to raise money for the [Central Area Youth Association](#), being proponents of the need to improve employment conditions," said [King County Executive Ron Sims](#). "Terrorists? I don't think so."

Worshippers at Dar-us-Salaam, the mosque under investigation, also reportedly scouted a ranch in Bly, Ore., as a possible terrorist training site.

The nature of the suspicions involving Mustafa Ujaama is not clear.

But in a statement this week, he said allegations against him and his brother are "utterly ridiculous." He said neither is a terrorist.

Only one member of Dar-us-Salaam has been charged. Semi Osman, 32, who lived at the Bly ranch in 1999, pleaded not guilty to federal charges

that he tried to obtain citizenship through a sham marriage and owned a semiautomatic handgun with serial number removed.

In his statement, James Ujaama, who is African American, said that other minority members should be wary of what he describes as overzealous law enforcement.

"This is surely a runaway government administration that I strongly believe knew about the events of September 11 prior to the attack on New York, and refused to intervene in lieu of economic and political gains," he wrote in a seven-page statement. "I also do not believe that [Zacarias Moussaoui](#) had anything to do with those events, and that he and many others are being railroaded in an attempt to cover up the truth.

"If my brother and I end up being indicted or jailed, we will understand that many great leaders before us suffered the same consequences. We are proud to stick to our Islamic convictions of standing out for truth and justice against all consequences."